



PRESS RELEASE: Avoid Trouble During the Dog Days of Summer

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 12, 2026
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Avoid Trouble During the Dog Days of Summer

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Summer is here, and temperatures are rising. Spending time outdoors with your dog can be enjoyable, but hot weather can become dangerous quickly. Even when it does not feel extremely hot to you, remember that pets have fur coats, a higher normal body temperature than humans, and limited ways to cool themselves.

How to Keep Your Pet Safe

There are several simple precautions you can take to reduce the risk of heat stress:

- Avoid hot surfaces such as asphalt and concrete, which can burn your pet's paws.
- Walk your dog during the coolest parts of the day, such as early morning or late evening.
- Make sure all animals have access to plenty of cool water and shade outdoors.
- Take extra care with pets at higher risk, including those that are overweight, short-nosed breeds such as pugs and bulldogs, and animals with medical conditions such as laryngeal paralysis.

Cooling vests may seem helpful, but they are not recommended. They interfere with the body's ability to cool internal temperature effectively. If conditions are so hot that you think your dog needs a cooling vest, it is too hot for a walk or hike.

Never Leave Your Dog in a Car

Do not leave your dog in a parked car, even with the windows cracked. The temperature inside can rise rapidly, putting your dog at serious risk of heat stress. A "quick errand" or "just a couple of items in the store" can be unpredictable.

In Vermont, if a dog is locked inside a hot car, a Good Samaritan may call the police, and the animal may be rescued by breaking the vehicle's window. Any resulting cost may be the owner's responsibility.

Signs of Heat Stress

Warning signs that your dog may be developing heat stress include:

- Anxiety or unusual agitation
- Excessive panting or drooling
- Restlessness
- Unsteadiness
- Abnormal tongue or gum color
- Collapse

If you notice any of these signs, call your veterinarian right away.

Well-meaning owners may be tempted to use cold water, ice packs, cold wet towels, or alcohol on the paw pads, but these methods can make the problem worse by interfering with safe cooling. Instead, wet your dog with lukewarm water and get to a veterinarian as quickly as possible.

When in Doubt, Leave Your Dog at Home

On especially hot days, the safest choice is often to leave your dog at home in a cool, comfortable space. If you do go out, walk early or late in the day and avoid taking your dog to street fairs, festivals, or other crowded events. In those settings, pets may be exposed to heat stress, hot pavement, accidental injury, or stomach upset from eating dropped food.

By following these precautions and watching for signs of heat stress, you can help your pet stay safe and comfortable all summer long.